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**Mission Statement:**

*Assessing and  
targeting the needs of  
our children and youth  
establish early  
preventive dental  
health practices that  
ultimately will improve  
the dental health  
status of our  
community.*

# Dental Health

§ **EPIDEMIOLOGY**

§ **PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING**

§ **ANIMAL CONTROL**

§ **HEALTH PROMOTION & OUTREACH**

§ **DENTAL HEALTH**

§ **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

1997-98  
Annual  
Report

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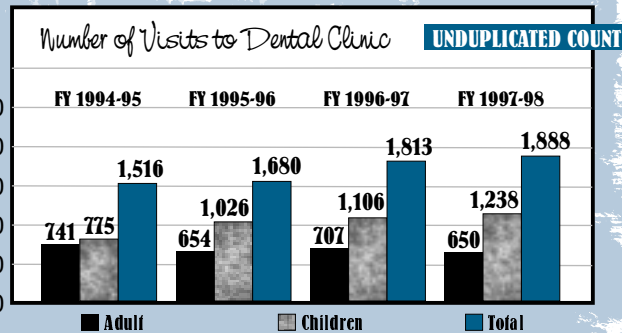
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# Dental Health

## Disparities in Oral Health Care:

- Only 40% of Americans have some form of dental insurance. Since dental insurance coverage is usually employment based, persons who do not work or work part-time are less likely to be insured.
- Public programs pay for less than 3% of all dental services.



Source: Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, Dental Program

- ☛ Dental decay is the most common infectious disease of U.S. children. It affects 52% of children aged 6 to 8 of elementary school age have been affected by dental caries.
- ☛ The cases of dental caries in children is concentrated, with 80% of the disease found in 25% of the childhood population. Higher disease levels generally are found among members of racial and ethnic minority groups, children from low-income families and children whose parents have less than a high school education.
- ☛ The level of untreated dental caries among members of racial and ethnic minority groups is greater than the national average.
- ☛ Poor children and those in racial and ethnic minority groups have less private dental insurance than the average for all children.
- ☛ Poor children have 37% fewer dental visits than nonpoor children.

In working toward reducing these disparities in oral health care, the Dental Division provided 5,356 clinical visits to 1,888 clients. More than 4,000 of the clinical visits, or 75%, were for children of low-income families. Nearly 700 of the clients, or 43%, were members of racial and ethnic minorities, reflecting a 7% increase in this clientele.



*"We know or can imagine how difficult it is to pay attention and learn with a toothache. I appreciate Health Department dental screenings at schools and their referrals so families know about their child's dental health needs. The new possibility of actual treatment for children with priority needs in the Mobile Health Van provides another way to make the hurting stop. Thank you for reaching out to children and families."*

*DeAnn Currin  
Principal, Elliott*

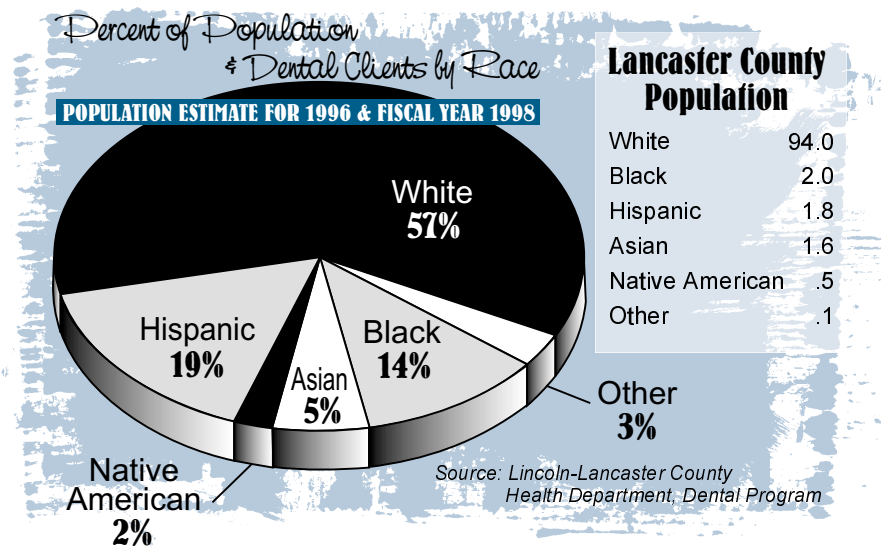
Financial, cultural, psychological, social and geographic barriers contribute to inadequate access to preventive dental care. To assess and facilitate the access for children to a regular source of dental health care, the Dental Health Division, in partnership with the Lincoln Public Schools, coordinates a school-based dental screening and referral program. The program utilizes dentists from the community and targets children that have not seen a dentist in the past 12 months. Highlights of the program include 5,131 children screened, 2,117 children referred and 207 children identified as needing priority dental care.

The Dental Division provides school based services for high risk children utilizing the mobile health clinic. Last year, the mobile health clinic made school site visits to Elliott, Holmes, Saratoga, Everett, McPhee, Park and St. Mary's targeting high risk children with dental services.

In cooperation with the Lincoln Action Program and Lincoln Public Schools, the Dental Division provided in-kind services to high risk children enrolled in Headstart. Dental services were provided to 42 children from the Headstart program. The Salvation Army participated by providing the mobile health clinic with the opportunity to visit its location to target high risk children in the area who are enrolled in Headstart but are not accessing dental services. The monetary equivalent of our dental services is used as "match" for Headstart federal funding.



Fluoride has long been recognized as the most reliable and cost effective method for the prevention of tooth decay. The Dental Division has worked with rural schools and parent organizations to implement a school-based fluoride rinse program targeting children in kindergarten through the sixth grade living in areas with fluoride deficient drinking water. Children rinsing once a week with a .2 percent concentrate fluoride solution have a 20% - 50% reduction in the incidence of tooth decay. Nine rural schools participated, reaching 692 children.



- Members of racial and ethnic minority groups and poor adults have less dental insurance than the national average.
- Fewer members of racial and ethnic minority groups and poor adults had a dental visit in the preceding year.
- Only 15% of the elderly have any private dental insurance, and Medicare does not reimburse for routine dental services.

A Dental Screening and Referral Program, targeting low-income adults and elderly, screened and referred 369 clients. Through cooperation with the UNMC College of Dentistry, the Department of Social Services and the General Assistance Program, these clients received dental services at no fee or reduced fees. The services provided through this collaboration maximize resources, minimize costs to the county, and provide clients with the basic needs that help promote employability.

To increase community awareness of the importance of dental health and early detection of dental disease, the Dental Health Division offers presentations on dental health topics that include oral hygiene, smokeless tobacco, nutrition, and oral pathology. The Division gave 33 presentations to 900 children and adults.